

V

821.8

Gib/Aue

46170



00046170

A rectangular decorative border with a repeating floral and leaf pattern surrounds the central text.

BOMBAY BRANCH
OF THE
Royal Asiatic Society.

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

OF the verse in this book, "King Hermaunce," "Tivoli," "Wayfaring," and "The Singers" were first printed in the late *Northern Counties' Magazine*, *The Saturday Review*, *The Week's Survey*, and *McClure's Magazine* respectively.

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

AND OTHER SONG

46170

ac

BY

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON



LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1902



00046170

To E. G.

Sal. 0

11/2/88

46170

Contents

	PAGE
The Queen's Vigil	7
King Hermaunce	28
The Wanderer	31
Salve Regina	36
Tivoli	39
Wayfaring	44
The Singers	45
The Eternal Way	46
"If once I could gather in song".	48
The Waters of Lethe	49
Elegy	64



The Queen's Vigil

I

AMONG her singing maids, within
The garden of the trellised vine,
At angelus Queen Armelin
Drank the rose-fragrant air like wine :
She heard the knell of labour rung ;
She saw the golden sunset-fires
Turn all to soaring flame the spires,
With golden clouds above them hung ;
About her roses idly swung—
Dew-laden censers in the air ;
And weary-hearted maidens sung

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Old melodies of Love's despair
Full-mournfully at day's decline.

She looked across the ridged sea
Of basking gables, red and steep ;
The hooded houses tranquilly
Drowsed in a golden haze of sleep ;
No clamour stirred throughout the town,
No murmur from the unseen street
That rang no more to mailed feet :
She saw the white roads winding down
From the high cornlands, glooming brown
With unreaped harvest over-ripe,
Where summer slept with tarnished crown ;
And but some wandering goatherd's pipe
Shrilled, eddying in the silence deep.

Thus she had watched with longing sore,
When armies climbing to the plain,

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Unto the never-ending war,
Had travelled, ere the winter's wane,
With banners blue and harness bright,
That glittered in the frosty sun
Until the valley's crest was won ;
When, fading from her yearning sight,
The blaze of arms in sparks of light
Had perished in horizon grey.
O weary, since, the listening night,
And wearier the watch by day
For banners coming not again !

The while she gazed, the maidens' song
Died on their lips ; and each one breathed
A name, which but a name, too long
With ever-flowering memories wreathed,
In Love's hid chamber of the heart
Had hung : upon the silence came
To Armelin the kingly name

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Of Pellinore ; and, like a dart
That cleft the evening calm apart,
New anguish pierced her. " Pellinore ! "
She cried ; yet no fresh tears might start
From eyes wept tearless, though no more
Her lord should come with war-blade sheathed.

Low-bowed as one who, silent, grieves
For some impending woe unknown,
She leant among the trellised leaves,
Crushing the clusters yet ungrown ;
The grapes, unswollen yet and green,
Nor ripened for the gurgling press,
As bitter wine of her distress
Were spilt, beneath her woe, unseen.
The maidens moved not round the queen,
Nor looked on her with pitying eyes ;
For separate sorrows stood between,
Deep-ranged, as serried shades that rise

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Round Love that ever mourns alone.

Then shivered pale the sunset glow ;
And dimly through dew-falling gloom
That veiled the slumbering town below,
She saw the vast cathedral loom,
Grey-pinnacled with shadows cold
Where late had flamed the golden spires.
The glow-worm's emerald signal-fires
Lighted the cool, green dusk, and bold
The bats about the ramparts old
Fluttered with silence-weaving flight :
While drowsily above the mould
The roses swung, and on the night
Unloosed their petalled wealth of bloom.

II

In sorrow sped the darkling hours ;

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

In sorrow dawned the flashing morn,
Awaking bright, belated flowers
To keen, brief days of sunshine born ;
Beneath a cold, star-gleaming sky
To perish, by the swift frost slain ;
Or droop through days of autumn rain :
In sorrow noonday drifted by,
Blue-winged, unclouded, heavily
Over the unreaped harvest-lands :
Once more the bells' clear melody
Rang sweet release to weary hands
That toiled, unmated and forlorn.

No voice within the garden stirred ;
Nor throbbing lute nor quivering lyre,
Nor any song of maid or bird ;
Only the shrill and reedy choir
Of frogs that ever-piping wake
In golden lily-cups afloat

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Upon the dark, unrippling moat,
When, in the deep and grassy brake,
Unseen the armoured crickets shake
Their whirring wings with soothing din.
While each maid mourned for far love's sake,
Alone, untended, Armelin
Stole out, unknown, in veiled attire.

Her white face hid, her head low-bowed,
She passed the gateway guard unseen:
A wavering, grey, uncertain cloud,
She moved the heavy shades between;
Down through the unheeding town she passed,
Threading with eager haste the maze
Of narrow streets and darkening ways;
Till with tumultuous heart at last,
And straining pulses beating fast,
She came to where in sunlight soared
Exultant, pinnacled and vast,

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Unto the glory of the Lord
The house of Heaven's eternal Queen.

Still through the glittering blue air
The swallows clipped with flashing wings;
And still the evening light shone fair
On sculptured saints and carven kings;
While, pausing in the golden glow,
She saw how wondering Beauty sprung
From chaos when the stars were young,
Then drooped again to labouring woe;
And how the wind-sown weed may grow
To wreathe the crown of stone with green,
And martins build their nest below
The braided head of some proud queen,
Whose fame no wandering harper sings.

Resplendent, through the open door,
She saw the southern rose of glass,

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Agleam as if the summer's store
Of cornland flowers that flame and pass—
The poppy red, the cockle blue,
And yellow charlock—gathered there
By angel-hand with tender care,
In fresh, unfading beauty grew,
Imperishably bright and new,
Though now no wind of morning strayed
Mid opening petals, and the dew
That evening dropped with dreamful shade
Fell only in unflowering grass.

Slow-passing through the portal, soon
She rested in the pillared cool:
As oft 'neath arching boughs at noon,
By some fern-shadowed forest pool,
Her heart had drunk the breathing calm
Of solitude, so now, alone
Among the soaring groves of stone,

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

The silence filled her soul like balm.
No longer chant or surging psalm
Waked echoes round the dusky shrine
Of those who bear the martyr's palm,
Which burgeoned in the hands divine
That meekly drove the humble tool.

Above her burned the northern rose
Wherein, enthroned for evermore,
Our Lady of the Seven Woes,
Who earth's grey wreath of sorrows bore,
Reigns; while, with plumage never dim,
The four white doves, with pinions spread,
Enaureoled, hover round her head;
And angel-hosts and cherubim
Before her bow; and seraphim
With radiant many-folded wings
Eternally her glory hymn;
And patriarchs and crownèd kings

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Through everlasting day adore.

Slowly the clustering shadows crept
Round Armelin, so still and white:
And slowly, flowing darkly, swept
Through choir and nave the tide of night;
Till, looking upward, she could see
The branchèd vault no longer clear,
As though each mighty, soaring pier
Pillared unknown eternity;
Whence, dropping ever-silently,
Peace fell upon her woe like dew,
And in dark, mournful ecstasy
She dreamed, and comfort filled anew
Her soul long-parched in ruthless light.

Arising, with slow steps she sought
The place where tapers starred the gloom,
Clear and unwavering fires, uncaught

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Within the censers' fitful fume—
Where man's undying worship, ere
The ages out of darkness came,
Had burned a druid-kindled flame.
Thither came Armelin, and there
She kneeled. Upon the wings of prayer
Her faithful spirit fluttering soared,
Lest dawn should bring some fresh despair,
In lonely vigil for her lord
Who strove against embattled doom.

Her white hands folded o'er her breast,
She prayed, and in the dusk they seemed
Like snowy plumes of doves at rest;
While on her hair the gold light gleamed,
Unhindered by her loosened veil,
From countless votive flames that kept
A vigil bright for maids who slept,
For love's lone watchnight all too frail;

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

And over her in moonlit mail,
With blue wings crossed, a seraph shone:
As ever o'er the darkest dale
Burns one clear star when day is gone,
Within the night his glory streamed.

III.

She prayed until the midnight hour
Unceasing, though in weariness
Her head sank, like a drooping flower,
Upon her shadow-broidered dress ;
When, clanging loudly through the night,
Full-wide the western door was flung ;
And shrill the startled portal rung
With mailed tramp, and quivered bright
With glint of steel and torches' light,
That leapt in flaming tongues of red
O'er war-stained casques and faces white,

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

The gold smoke moving overhead,
A glowing cloud above the press.

Slow-wavering through the pillared aisle,
The shadows shrank before the glare,
As if to shelter yet awhile

The queen with her lone sorrow there ;
She rose and looked with pale surprise,
For unto her the pageant seemed
Some strange, bewildering vision dreamed
At midnight, which her waking eyes
Would scatter, as the light that dies
On the low edge of some dark shower,
Or as the gleaming bow that flies
The sun's increasing gold of power
O'er blue seas glittering mile on mile.

But suddenly a new despair
Laid icy clutch upon her heart,
And moved cold fingers through her hair ;

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Within her quivering breast a dart
Of dread more swiftly, keenly stung :
She knew not whence it came nor why,
Only it seemed that she must die ;
Her life for one dark moment hung
Upon a slender thread that swung
Over the still abyss of death ;
Then life's returning tempest wrung
Her bosom, and with sobbing breath
She watched, in silence and apart :

When slowly through the open door
She saw in long procession come
War-weary knights who silent bore
A shrouded form, in sorrow dumb,
On lance-locked shields, that 'neath the weight
Of death's sad burden bended not ;
The fitful torches, flickering, shot
Red gleams about the sombre state

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Of him who shelter sought so late
Within the shadowy house of God
From random-flying shafts of fate,
That ever strew the kindred sod
With shattered splendours, pale and numb.

Through all the echoing nave, unstayed,
They moved with solemn pacing slow ;
Before the altar-steps they laid
Their purple-shrouded burden low ;
Then, one by one, about it kneeled—
In silence of heart-breathèd prayer
That struggled blind with blind despair—
Each mailed knight with head on shield,
Subdued at last in sorrow's field ;
And, sadly, spake a voice forlorn :—
“ Him only unto God we yield.
Here we may watch with him, till morn
Awake the slumbering town to woe.”

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Then from a neighbouring pillar's shade,
Before the words in murmur died,
Moved Armelin, and all dismayed
The knights fell back on either side
As from some midnight phantasy ;
Half-turning in the flickering light,
She stood before them frail and white,
Saying : " Go rest, who faithfully
Have borne my fallen lord to me ;
To-morrow round the stricken throne
Your subject grief may bend the knee ;
To-night my heart would keep alone
The vigil of the widowed bride."

IV.

Unquestioning, they rose, and stole
Into the starry night once more . . .
To Armelin it seemed the whole

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Of life closed with the closing door,
That shut without the breathing world.
She only knew that, with sheathed sword,
Before the altar lay her lord,
The banner of his glory furled ;
While yet, above him hovering, curled
The fume of smouldering torches dim ;
And, as she moved, the darkness swirled
About her, till she came to him,
And, bending, murmured " Pellinore ! "

She drew the mantle from his face,
But naught to her the dusk revealed.
With trembling hand she sought to trace
The features hid ; the cold lips sealed
Her fingers touching—swift she pressed
Her own lips to them ; with hot breath
She kissed, as though she strove with death
From his embrace her lord to wrest.

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

Awhile, with breast to his cold breast,
She lay, as though in slumber fair,
With low, soft breathing, undistressed.
Unloosened fell her showering hair,
A dim gold cloud upon the shield.

How long in tranced dream she lay
She knew not ; nor if time swift fled,
Nor whether it were night or day.
She only knew that he was dead,
And waiting o'er : that, in the end,
Because she cried upon his name,
From out the 'wilderer night he came
Strife-worn to her, that she might bend
With love o'er him and gently tend
His body through the last calm hours ;
Death waiting by her like a friend.
She only knew that all her powers
Drifted, with ebbing life, away.

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

But as the waking-dream of dawn
Fell, quivering, through the radiant glass,
She rose, and, for a while withdrawn,
She watched the mournful shadows pass
From his white face. Then, with a smile,
She drew his sword and swiftly pressed
Sharp death to her unflinching breast ;
And sank low by his side, the while
Slowly through nave and choir and aisle
The dimness moved, and wan light filled
The dark ; grey pillars, file on file,
Loomed out ; and, o'er the sleepers stilled,
Spread the far roof's high, vaulted mass.

Then all the eastern windows flamed
Triumphal with arising morn,
And sunlight-stricken hues proclaimed
The miracle of day new-born ;
Again within the soaring choir,

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL

With sapphire wings no longer dim,
Flashed out the blazoned seraphim,
Burning with sheer, celestial fire ;
With silent harp and muted lyre,
Young angels in clear-shining green
Glowed fresh and bright as love's desire,
Above the sleeping king and queen,
By strife and sorrow overworn.

King Hermaunce

A Chorus

[Hermaunce, King of the Red City, whilst drinking from a spring in the forest after the heat of the chase, was stabbed by his two foster-sons. As he lay sore wounded, a knight rode by, who, seeing the dying king, bore him swiftly to the Red Ship, which rode at anchor in the bay, and laid him on his golden bed therein. With his last breath the King commanded the knight to pen a letter appealing to the knights of King Arthur's Court to avenge his murder. Then the Red Ship put out to sea, the dread missive folded in the hand of the slain King. The vessel came to shore in the mouth of the Humber, and Sir Palomides receiving the fateful summons at once set sail for the Red City, slew the usurpers, and freed the people from their thrall.]

KING Hermaunce puts out to sea ;

The sea is grey beneath the wind.

King Hermaunce of the Red City !

Mariners, mariners, where are your songs when
the wind is filling the blood-red sails ?

King Hermaunce in his Ship of Red ;

The sea is grey beneath the wind.

KING HERMAUNCE

King Hermaunce on his golden bed,
'Tween the low grey sky and the wide grey sea,
the moaning water and wind that wails !

Where are your kinsmen, King Hermaunce ?

The sea is grey beneath the wind.

Who swung the sword and who thrust the lance
In splendid tourney and desperate fray, to win
you honour and pride of name ?

Where is the crown that crowned your head ?

The sea is grey beneath the wind.

Why are your eyes so still and so dread ?

Why is your harness so dulled with blood, and
who hath broken your sword of fame ?

Why did you lag in the greenwood chase ?

The sea is grey beneath the wind.

What is the shadow that covers your face ?

Why are your lips so cold and blue that leant
so red to the spring-waters clear ?

KING HERMAUNCE

Why did you leave your golden throne ?

The sea is grey beneath the wind.

Where are the sons you called your own ?

Who rules your kingdom and lords your house,
and harries the heart of your people with
fear ?

King Hermaunce puts out to sea ;

The sea is grey beneath the wind.

King Hermaunce of the Red City !

How shall the slayer escape the slain ? From
the hand of the dead what cunning shall
save ?

King Hermaunce in his Ship of Red ;

The sea is grey beneath the wind.

King Hermaunce on his golden bed !

The dead shall cry, and the just shall heed, and
the Knight-Avenger shall cross the wave !

The Wanderer

I KNOW not what I follow; yet each morn
My pack I lift, and take the road that leads
I know not whither, through what wilds forlorn,
By what drear waste of winter-flooded meads,
Beyond what snow-bright peaks in lucent airs
upborne.

By raven-haunted pinnacles of stone,
Through vast, eternal solitudes I pass
Where all day long across bleak ridges lone
The keen wind shivers through the withering
grass,
Then dies down craggy aisles with low, cold,
shuddering moan;

THE WANDERER

Through valleys glooming black with leafless
trees;

Across wild uplands, gleaming mile on mile
With billowy drifts that under starlight freeze,
Wave after wave, with no dark, cleaving isle—
Like some untraversed world of unknown polar
seas.

And I have fought the tempest on the height,
The bitter, stinging snow that blinding swirls
Over the moorlands, blotting out the light;
Then, sweeping on, in wilder tumult whirls
Across the further fells with desolating flight:

The while I heard Death moving through the
blast

With dry, cold rustling of deep-drifting snow,
And thought to look upon him and at last
The end of all my wandering to know;
But ever muffled close in cloudy robes he passed.

THE WANDERER

Or by dark winter seas beneath the stars
I strayed, and saw white-curdling waters lash
Along black reefs, whereon grey ribs and spars
Of wrecks forlorn for ever toss and crash
On heaving waves among the jagged, seaworn
scars.

Yet not all-songless lies the way before,
And, though for me the southern-hearted bird
May sing o'er moonlit waters nevermore,
By misty northern firths at dawn I heard
The long, cool-piping call of curlews by the
shore.

And I have seen—when soft the west winds
blow
With kindlier breath, and plumed with dove-grey
showers—
Pale-glinting sunbeams light the perfect bow,

THE WANDERER

Rekindling irised hopes of April hours,
Above wet, glistening wastes of slowly-melting
snow.

I know not what I follow; yet each day
Eternal impulses more keenly urge
My eager steps along the wandering way
That runs unwearied ever on the verge
Of far, gold-quivering dawns, beyond horizons
grey.

From storm to storm, yet brighter from the
stress
Of scathing winds, in me the live flame leaps,
That under laden boughs beneath the press
Of summer hours, beside leaf-shadowed deeps,
Slow sank and smouldered dim, grown dull with
heaviness;

THE WANDERER

While every dream that through the dusky
maze

Of tangled branches fluttered on faint wings
Scales now with eagle flight the windy ways;
Each morn some more triumphal vision springs
To quivering life, and soars with seraph wings
ablaze.

Shall all this winter wandering naught avail—
The perils in the wilderness; the sheer
Snow-silent solitudes of hill and dale;
The day-long strife with elements; the clear
Unfaltering quest of faith along the unknown
trail?



Salve Regina !

ABOVE the forest, fleece on fleece
Of golden cloud and fire on fire
Stream upward from the sinking sun.
In breathless ecstasy of peace
Day dies ; and, all day-labour done
In harvest-field and barn and byre,
The brown lay-brothers troop to prayer ;
And slowly through the echoing choir
Rises the hymn of Mary, where
Rank upon rank, in white arrayed—
Their long day's silence grown to song—
Like spirit-forms the fathers throng,
And, glimmering in the dimness, fade.

SALVE REGINA

Deep-throated through the air
Their chanting surges loud and long:—

Dulcis Virgo Maria,

Ora pro nobis,

Sancta Dei genetrix !

Like poplars swaying in the gloom
Beneath the wind of evening bowed,
The white-robed monks in silence bend :
Then, rising, through the dusk they loom,
Unto the prayer's low-breathed end
Chanting yet louder and more loud—
Each brawny, bearded brother strong
With toiling under sun and cloud,
Deep-voiced as wind, thick boughs among ;
Till, as the angelus of rest
Rings out unto the lonely star
That hangs above the cloudy bar
Of purple glowing in the West,

SALVE REGINA

Slow sinks at last the song,
In echoes dying, strange and far :—
Dulcis Virgo Maria,
Ora pro nobis,
Sancta Dei genetrix !

La Trappe, August, 1901.

Tivoli

ACROSS the vast Campagna, coloured still
With shadows of the early flooding seas
That flowed above it in the ancient days,
To Tivoli, a city built in dreams
Above the pillared streams
Of waters falling through the leafy maze
Of sea-green olive trees
That shade with moving dusk her throning hill,
We strayed one April morn.
Behind us lay the legend of old Rome :
The grey, o'erwhelming dome,
Tombing dead empires sprung of deathless
deeds
To sheer disaster. From the storied gloom,

TIVOLI

Earth-mounded triumphs and time-trampled
state,

And memories forlorn
Of battles bright with banners, and the wild
Victorious youth of heroes born
To mighty peril and star-trammelled fate,
We wandered with eyes bright
And hearts a-hunger for the shrill
Cool piping of Italian reeds,
That shook from olive-clouded vale and hill
Ere Italy, clear-dreaming as a child,
Arose and struggled with her splendid doom.

We climbed the hill and wandered through dim
groves

Of olive trees with twisted roots upreared—
Enchanted dryads striving to be free,
Their yearning forms by fiery passion seared;
And every little leaf of every tree

TIVOLI

Quivered with breath and murmured of old
loves.

Bewildered by vague fears
Of some lone wood-god stirred
From darkling slumber in the deep of years ;
Alert for sounds unheard ;
And quaking at the flight
Of every startled bird ;
We fled across a striding bridge,
And rested panting on a ridge
In showering April light.

Then suddenly before our wondering eyes
We saw, sun-trancèd, rise
Fair Tivoli, a city built in dreams
Unto the music of her falling streams,
That thunder from her craggy steep
And, flashing, plunge where groves of shadow
sleep.

TIVOLI

Through all the murmurous noon we lay,
And watched the rainbow-coloured spray
From snowy tumult leap,
As if some caverned spirit strove to fling
Some living drops on Vesta's pillared height,
To waken once again that early spring
When in her sacred house
From maiden-gathered boughs
The live flame burst to light eternity.

O temple of grey stone
By roving winds o'erblown,
Thine altars cold, thy secret places bare
To every wandering air ;
From northern hills to thee
My spirit turns ;
Thy long-forsaken fire
New-lit within me burns

TIVOLI

With all the keen desire
Of all the virgin eyes that kindled to the light
Through slow, unfaltering days,
Or watched with steadfast gaze
The clear flame leaping in the heart of night.

Wayfaring

I CAME upon her where the poppies lighted
League after league of green with flames of red.
She looked across the windy morn clear-sighted,
With gleaming throat and lily-lifted head,

Like some fresh-waking flower at dawn discovered
Within a lone, wild place of quivering dew.
About her eyes a fluttering laughter hovered,
Then faded as a bird's flight in the blue.

I passed unknown, yet still my heart remembers
Through wandering years—though other faces
 rise
With passionate, burning eyes aglow like
 embers—
The calm of blue winds folded in her eyes.

The Singers

WHEN God had loosed the choral spheres
To sweep through spacious night,
One laggard star that, swerving, soared,
He plucked from out the flight.

He brake its fire between His hands;
It fell in shredded flame:
On bridled winds across the void
The sons of singing came,
To rule the world by right of song,
To raze the forts of death,
And hurl high-throned oblivion down
With storm of chanting breath.

The Eternal Way

O WHITHER goest Thou, little Child?

From Bethlehem to Calvary.

The way is peril-set and wild,
Thy young feet stumble piteously;
Turn Thou that I may shelter Thee.

O whither goest Thou, Son of Man?

From Bethlehem to Calvary.

What bitter doom of fate doth ban
Thy body to the branchèd tree?
Turn Thou that I may shelter Thee.

THE ETERNAL WAY

O whither goest Thou, fair young God?

From Bethlehem to Calvary.

None follows where Thy feet have trod ;

In Thy lone immortality

No heart of man may shelter Thee.

Song

If once I could gather in song
A flower from my garden of dreams—
The dew from its petals unshaken,
When starry and bright they awaken—
All men to the wonder would throng.

Though ever at dawning I go
By the marge of the life-giving streams
That, shadowed by blossoms upspringing,
Remember the hills in their singing,
The fells of their birth in their flow;

Or early or late though I fare
To gather my garden of dreams
For the barren, forsaken and lonely;
I bring from the shadow-world only
Pale blossoms that perish in air.

The Waters of Lethe

An unending procession of souls descends to the river ;
Shadow-Spirits hover restlessly above the valley.

The Shadow-Spirits.

HITHER they wander with bewildered eyes,
Where no light falls from vague, unmoving
skies ;

Where sun nor moon nor any starry gleam
Pierces the flowing darkness of the stream :
Hither they wander—faltering, crownless kings ;
Queens pale with peril ; warriors battle-worn ;
Strayed, wondering children, frail with earthly
tears ;

Old men and lone, a-weary of wise years
And labourings long ;
Lovers forlorn
From their bright passion torn ;

THE WATERS OF LETHE

And poets rapt with dream,
Whose lips yet quiver with the dying song,
Whose fingers tremble yet among unsounding
strings.

Hither they wander from the light of day
Down to dark waters ; standing on the shore,
They dream awhile of griefs grown old and grey
And sorrows that will shake their hearts no
more ;

Then leaning low
To Lethe's dim, un murmuring flow,
They drink oblivion, gliding far away,
Whither our wavering flight
May never hope to stray.
For we on earth ne'er turned
To any timeless star,
But ever followed far
Each meteor-flame that burned

THE WATERS OF LETHE

Awhile within the night ;
Till, yielding up our breath,
We heard the voice of doom :—
“ Ye shall not pass the gloom
That lies 'twixt life and death ;
But, pale, wind-hovering ghosts,
Shall wander ever the sea
Of darkness washing between
The perilous, pinnacled coasts
Of time and eternity.
In the valley of death shall ye keep
Your vigil, but never of sleep
Shall ye drink, though your dry hearts yearn,
And your grey lips wither and burn ;
Never your sorrow shall lean
To the cool-flowing waters and deep.”

A Warrior.

So swiftly have I travelled from the light

THE WATERS OF LETHE

Into this silent vale of shadowy fears,
Mine eyes yet throb with sun ; the din of fight
Yet pulses in mine ears.

Through the fell forest of the foeman-spears
I rode exulting ; in the clash of swords
I triumphed over battle-famous lords,
And slew the pride of many a glittering knight ;
Till, plunging ever deeper in the stress,
I fell beneath a sure, unswerving blade
Into this valley of forgetfulness,
Wherein I wander, through vast groves of shade,
Seeking the flower of love I cast aside
For flash of swords and banners proud unfurled—
The white flower-face that, in my dream of pride,
Of conquered cities and a cowering world,
I left forsaken.

Lo, before me flows
A stream of deep sweet waters, and my lips,

THE WATERS OF LETHE

Thirsting, drink restfulness ; a dull eclipse
Shadows the sun of battle ; bright the rose
Of love unfolds about me, and the gloom
Quivers with opening glories ; darkness glows
To one fire-hearted, splendour-petalled bloom !

Shadow-Spirits.

Beyond the valley shade
He looks with kindling eyes,
Who ever unafraid
Rode under earthly skies,
Nor ever, daunted, turned
From out the path of strife
While yet within him burned
The passionate fire of life.
O that we too might stand
Amid unrustling reeds,
That banner with dark plumes the shadowy
strand !

THE WATERS OF LETHE

O that we too might lean,
The willow boughs between,
To gather in cupped hand
The ever-flowing silence of the river
That, songless, lightless, through the valley
speeds !

O that we too might glide,
With eager eyes and happy lips a-quiver,
Into the mist that veils the further side !

A Maiden.

Ah, whither, whither hath his spirit fled ?
In vain, in vain my fearful, faltering haste
Through the lone hills, across the sunless waste,
Down this deep valley, where I thought to see,
Beyond the shade of each dark, drooping tree,
His bright soul lighting as a flaming sword
The dusky groves of death.
Swift have I followed, but too fleet he sped ;

THE WATERS OF LETHE

As e'er on earth amid the warrior-horde
I followed in the triumph of my lord,
Bright-eyed, with panting breath ;
Until one day from the disastrous field
I saw his body on a litter borne ;
But loosened was the soul that would not yield—
His eyes as forest pools of light forlorn ;
And, gazing in their depths, I could not mourn
The broken sword, the battle-riven shield.
My life fell from me as a grief outworn,
And, like a star that flies through perilous night,
My spirit shaken free
Followed his fleet-winged soul in its victorious
flight.

O darkling waters dumbly flowing,
Hold ye the secret of his travelling feet ?
Hath any sun of splendour glowing
Troubled with glories fleet

THE WATERS OF LETHE

Your swift, unrippling flood? Hath any leant
Low in the reeds that shiver on the brink,
Your brimming rapture of deep peace to drink?
O willows, where your pendent branches trail
Unwithering tresses in the flowing stream,
I dip my hands, grown shadowlike and pale,
To lift the waters, dropping without gleam,
Unto my drinking lips. The shadows fail;
Old sorrows scatter as a dream at waking:
O flame of joy, the folded darkness shaking!
O hills of peace that, dawning, calmly rise!
Beneath your shelter, in a dreaming vale,
He waits me with bright welcome in his eyes.

Shadow-Spirits.

One moment pausing with uplifted hands,
Aflame with love she stands;
Then, clothed with love as with exultant light,
She passes from our sight,

THE WATERS OF LETHE

While deeper darkness closes round our woe,
Our woe that never dies,
Though shed in your swift night old sorrows
drown.

O stream of Lethe, all the gathered tears
Of all the travailing world ; grey age's labouring
years ;

The king's cold state ; the poet's burning crown ;
The glittering woe that love's wild rapture weaves
Fall, withering like September-frosted leaves,
By winds unshaken, fluttering idly down,
And mingle in your dark oblivious flow.

An Old Man.

Sleep, sleep at last—untroubled, starless, deep,
Eternal slumber flowing without dream !
O Lethe, long by divers paths and steep
My feet have sought the solace of your stream :
Wearied my soul of straining for the light,

THE WATERS OF LETHE

That never clove the mist with dawning gleam ;
Mine eyes have searched the vast, aërial night,
The glittering desolation of the stars,
The white-ridged winter of the barren moon ;
And looked upon the shadows of the sun.
The mailed earth no secret held for me ;
I pierced the terror of her ancient scars,
The hunger of her heart's devouring fires.
I fathomed ocean's dim-lit mystery ;
And through the glow of man's triumphal noon
I saw the naked bones of his desires,
And how his grief from early joy was wrought,
His peace by passion spun.
With labour keen I taught my feet to climb,
Mine eyes to scan, unfaltering, without fear,
The ice-bound pinnacles of space and time :
Yet never from the peak my spirit caught
The flame of wings celestial, or the clear
Ethereal music of god-driven cars,

THE WATERS OF LETHE

Nor unto bright, immortal rapture won.

Now, now the false lights fail; vain rumours
cease :

Unto sure rest, at last, forlorn I creep.

I drink of your unfathomable deep,

O flowing stream of peace !

I sink, I sink in sleep.

The Shadow-Spirits.

Sleep, sleep! O stream, do your dark waters
hold

None other solace for the eyes that weep?

Shall they who sow in sorrow only reap

Thy grey, unflowering, cold

Harvest of shadows and eternal sleep?

A Poet.

O valley, beautiful from time's dim birth,

With feet of white souls passing! O deep
groves,

THE WATERS OF LETHE

Still tremulous with the gust of passionate flames
Of song-remembered loves,

And heroes whose bright names

Still kindle in the memory of the earth !

O Lethe flood,

At touch of whose swift waters the frail bud

Of earth-born beauty breaks into unwithering
flower !

Amid your glooms I follow, follow still,

Beauty, whose wandering strays

My feet have ever sought through life's dream-
haunted ways ;

Beauty that, earthward raining hour by hour,

Lights in a dewy shower

In some green dell, and flows

From flower to tree,

From tree to forest-covered vale and hill,

Flooding the earth with ecstasy, and glows

From valleys unto uplands peaked with snows ;

THE WATERS OF LETHE

Then, streaming higher,
Flushes her native skies with cloudy fire,
That, falling, drowns in the all-gathering sea,
To dawn a moon-pale spirit in the night.

O ever-flowing colour, changing form,
Wind-flying flame, blue-soaring melody,
The star of love's bright being and the light
On sleeping children's faces,
Bloom of the desert places, the wild gleam
Cleaving the midnight fury of the storm—
Beauty that, flying, taught my feet to follow
Through winter waste, and summer-dreaming
hollow :

Your torch hath lighted even death's still gloom,
And led where shadows brim
Dark Lethe's silent stream.

O waters dim
With old heroic sorrow, starless grief,

THE WATERS OF LETHE

That drank of you oblivion's dull relief,
Steal not from me, with slumber-breathing fume,
Or soul-dissolving dream,
The gleaming wind, the flower, the flying star
My life has followed through lone years and far.

Cool, cool the waters to my lips ; a veil
Falls from mine eyes ; beyond the gloom I see,
No longer faltering, frail,
The sheer, divine imperishable might
Of Beauty thronèd in eternity.

The Shadow-Spirits.

O that our wings might tire
And falter in their flight ;
The wandering desire
Die down within our breast
The keen, devouring fire

THE WATERS OF LETHE

Perish in your deep night !

We crave no rapture bright,

O stream, beyond your shore ;

Only for evermore

To drink, 'mid pale souls leaning, of your dark
waters rest.

Elegy

UNLOOSE the eager boat ;
Let her white sails unfurl
Where amber islands float
In sunset seas of pearl.

Too long her restless prow
Has chafed on alien strands ;
The night shall waft her now
Beyond bleak, mortal lands.

Where azure deeps afar
Break into golden foam,
Will dawn the pilot star,
To draw her glad sails home.



PRINTED BY R. FOLKARD AND SON, 22, DEVONSHIRE STREET,
QUEEN SQUARE, LONDON, W.C.

THE NETS OF LOVE

THE NETS OF LOVE

BY

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON



LONDON

ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET

1905

S2-h-52

TO
F. E. M.

NOTE.

For permission to reprint several of the poems in this book thanks are due to the Editors of *The Cornhill Magazine*, *The Spectator*, *The Outlook*, and *The Daily News*.

221.8
116 / 116

Contents

	PAGE
The Fugitive - - - - -	11
In the Byre - - - - -	16
The Fool - - - - -	20
The Lambing - - - - -	24
The Victor - - - - -	30
The Lough - - - - -	32
The Fire - - - - -	35
The Haymakers - - - - -	39
The Arrow - - - - -	45
Roman's Leap - - - - -	48
In the Night - - - - -	51
The Harp - - - - -	56



*I heard a harper sing
To the star-throned gods above :
“ O Starry Weavers of man’s fate,
Ye mock him ever, clown and king :
Though he escape the toils of hate,
He cannot flee the nets of love.”*



The Fugitive

As one who hears the baffled wolves' teeth click
Behind his heel, when, through the closing door,
He staggers spent, and, sinking to the floor,
Secure behind the bolted timbers lies,
Nigh-swooning in the rushes bedded thick,
With shuddering limbs and upward-staring eyes
That gaze and gaze in rapture but to see
The blessèd hearth-light shoot in yellow gleams
Among the shadowy rafters; so to thee,
O love, I come. Across ice-mailèd streams,
Knee-deep through frosted bracken, over scars
That cleave, dark-edged, a tingling sky of stars,

THE FUGITIVE

Through low-boughed forests, cavernous with
night,

By lairs of crouching deaths, to thee I win
At last, O love ; though, sharp upon my flight,
I know thy father's lean, blood-thirsty pack
Of thralls must follow, till, again, within
The shelter of thy prison-tower they take
The broken lover whom, upon the rack,
Night after night, they tortured for thy sake.

Yea, for thy sake : so said they, with a smile ;
But I, in anguish lying, looked the while,
Beyond the cell's dark vaulting, on thy face
Which burned compassionate o'er me till the
place

Seemed full of light and rustling of green leaves
And murmuring of some bough-shadowed stream.

THE FUGITIVE

Yea, I looked ever on thee, even as now
I look, O love, if this be no wild dream.

Oh, let my fingers touch thy moon-pale brow,
Thy clustered hair—the crisp, dim gold of
sheaves—

Thy warm, red, breathing lips, thy quivering
cheek !

I dream no more ; no pain-wrought vision thou,
No phantom that will vanish when the cord
Twines sharper in the flesh. I thank the Lord
The pulses of my fingers throb to thine.

Love, lean thou closer ; press thy lips to mine—
My lips that burn with year-long thirst un-
slaked—

Then, pausing, speak ; I yearn to hear thee speak

THE FUGITIVE

My name as thou didst breathe it ere I fell,
Love-blinded, in the pit thy father staked
To trap my life, because I loved too well.
Canst thou so speak it now? Dost thou not
shrink

From this fire-warped, rack-twisted thing that
came

To thee from out the shuddering night, to sink,
Huddled and spent, before thee? Nay, thine
eyes

Are quick with love—no cold compassion lies
In their blue deeps, with fire of love burnt
clear;

Pity and grief have perished in the flame
Of love triumphant that, by time unquenched,
Hath burst to life; beyond the clutch of fear
I lie, in love's flame-shower of rapture drenched.

THE FUGITIVE

Why dost thou start? What thunders shake
the door?

Fear not, O love; they come, but nevermore
Shall they lay hold on this frail life, whose fire,
Blazing exultant with fulfilled desire,
Hath leapt to loose heaven's glory through the
night,
And mingles with the everlasting light.

In the Byre

THE warm milk swishes in the pail ;
The kine's warm breathing fills the byre ;
My brow, against the hot flanks pressed,
Throbs, aching, as, with hands that tire,
I ease the straining teats, nor rest
Until the teeming udders fail.

But, louder than the hissing spurt,
My wild heart flutters at my side ;
And in my ears the pulses drum,
As through my veins, a burning tide,
The quick blood gushes ; blind and dumb,
I shudder like a leveret hurt.

IN THE BYRE

One moment in the pool of light
That quivers by the open door
A shadow fell as they went by :
I raised my eyes ; then looked no more.
They gazed upon the western sky
With parted lips and foreheads bright.

They passed ; and though I, toiling, bide,
My bitter thoughts are at their heel,
And follow where their footsteps go :
I see the peewit rise and wheel
Round them with creaking wings and slow ;
I tread the sheep-track at their side ;

With them I cross the frothing burn,
And scale the tumbled grey stone-dyke ;
And pant behind them through the brake

IN THE BYRE

That climbs the crag; the last rays strike
The rippling waters of the lake,
Far, far below, as, in the fern,

They sink to watch the bobbing coots
That dive among the reedy sedge;
A sheep from some far shieling cries;
Gold-quivering, on the fell's dark edge
The day's last glimmer pales and dies;
Night gathers; and a lone owl hoots.

Then, as he turns to her, the light
Leaps in her eyes, and blind I flee
Across the fells—as I have fled
Through nights of quaking agony,
Till day's cold dawning, pale and dread,
Hath put the sheltering dark to flight.

IN THE BYRE

O big, brown kine within the byre,
Life stirs no tumult in the pools
Of your brown eyes that gaze on me ;
But I, within the net of fools
Entangled, must for ever be
The prey of passion's prisoned fire.

46170

The Fool

NIGHT-LONG the rushes whisper as I turn
With restless rustling to the flickering dark
That shudders as the spent logs smouldering burn,
On the cold hearthstone, to a dwindling spark.
Though I, at last, escape day's mockery
Of bitter-jangling bells about my ears,
No meed of easeful slumber comes to me.
The rushes whisper ever of my fears ;
And now, when from my lips the nimble jest
No longer tumbles, broken meats to earn,
My heart, by day crushed silent in my breast,
Cries out within me, and I turn and turn,
Finding nor sleep nor comfort anywhere.

THE FOOL

If I but close my eyes, I see her stand
Before me in the night—her thick, brown hair
Thrust back from her bright forehead by the hand
That shades the burning hazel of her eyes ;
Or else I see her, seated by her lord
On the high daïs as the dim light dies ;
Or with her chattering maidens at the board,
Beneath the flame of torches ; or, at morn,
Through the sun-dappled gloom of alleys green,
Whose arches echo to the rousing horn,
I see her ride like some great ballad-queen.

I see her as I saw her all day long—
With clear, untroubled eyes and lifted head,
Dreaming of love, or singing some old song
Of lovers happy with the happy dead,
With pitiful, sweet mouth ; for love to her

THE FOOL

Is a fresh-welling stream of happiness
Which no cold winds to troubled eddies stir,
Nor pebbles ruffle to shrill-tongued distress.

But, love's a spate rock-bound that foams and
frets;

A tossing beacon in tempestuous night;
A mighty salmon tangled in the nets;
A mallard arrow-stricken in full flight;
A hounded stag at bay within his lair;
A heron 'neath the taloned falcon's swoop;
A crag-born kestrel taken in a snare;
An eagle caged within a gilded coop;
A battle-snuffing stallion on the curb;
A quivering target by a quarrel cleft;
A rankling wound that knows no healing herb;
A sea-swept galley of her rudder reft;

THE FOOL

A tethered bullock chafing in the byre;
A wolf sore-wounded in the trapper's pit;
A cloud of thunder with a heart of fire;
A sapling by the summer-lightning split;
A sword within a silken scabbard pent;
A ruddy fruit whose core is bitterness;
A giant captive in a victor's tent;
A breaking heart beneath a motley dress.

The Lambing

SOFTLY she slept in the night—her new-born
babe at her breast,

A little, warm, dimpling hand to the yielding
bosom pressed—

As I rose from her side to go—though sore was
my heart to stay—

To the ease of the labouring ewes that else would
have died ere day.

Banking the peats on the hearth, I reached from
the rafter-hook

My lanthorn, and kindled the wick; and, taking
my plaid and crook,

THE LAMBING

I lifted the latch, and turned, once more, to see
 if she slept,
And looked on the slumber of peace, ere into the
 night I stept—

Into the swirling dark of the driving, blinding
 sleet,
And a world that seemed to sway and slip from
 under my feet,
As if rocked in the wind that swept the starless,
 roaring night,
Yet fumed in a fury vain at my lanthorn's
 shielded light.

Clean-drenched in the first, wild gust, I battled
 across the garth,
And passed through the clashing gate—the warm
 peat-glow of the hearth

[THE LAMBING

And the peace of love in my breast—the craven
voices to quell,

As I set my teeth to the wind, and turned to
the open fell.

Over the tussocks of bent I strove till I reached
the fold—

My brow like ice, and my hands so numbed that
they scarce could hold

My staff, or unloosen the pen; but I heard a
lamb's weak cries

As the gleam of my lanthorn lit the night of its
new-born eyes.

Toiling and trembling, I watched each young
life struggle for breath,

Fighting till dawn for my flock with the oldest
of herdsmen, death;

THE LAMBING

And glad was my heart when, at last, the stack-
yard again I crossed,
And thought of the strife well-o'er with never a
yeanning lost.

But, ere I came to the door of my home, drawing
wearily nigh,
I heard with a boding heart a feeble, querulous
cry,
Like a motherless yeanning's bleat; and I stood
in the dawn's grey light,
Afraid of I knew not what, sore-spent with the
toil of the night.

Then, setting a quaking hand to the latch, I
opened the door,
And, shaking the cold from my heart, I stumbled
across the floor

THE LAMBING

Unto the bed where she lay, calm-bosomed, in
dreamless rest,
And the wailing baby clutched in vain at the
lifeless breast.

I looked on the cold, white face; then sank with
a cry by the bed,
And knew that the hand of death had stricken
my whole joy dead—
My flock, my world, and my heart—with my
love at a single blow;
And I cried: “I, too, will die!” and it seemed
that life ebbed low,
And death drew nigh unto me; when I felt the
touch on my cheek
Of a little, warm hand out-thrust, and I heard
that wailing weak;

THE LAMBING

And, knowing that not for me yet was there rest
from love or strife,
I caught the babe to my breast, and looked in
the eyes of life.

The Victor

You came not as I dreamed that you would come,
Hewing a pathway through embattled spears,
The morning on your brow ; yet all my fears
Fell stricken, and my sorrows faltered dumb.
Slowly you rode across the wintry heath
From some far field of battle, with bent head ;
Bearing a shield whose blazon war had shed ;
And at your stirrup swung a swordless sheath.
Your spent horse, stumbling 'mid the quaking peat,
Among the treacherous moss-hags, floundering,
 fell ;
As one who moves in some fear-ridden spell,
Whose eyes are dulled and blinded by defeat,

THE VICTOR

You led the lame beast gently up the slope
Until you came within the castle-garth ;
I drew you, shivering, to the blazing hearth,
And watched the red, uncertain tide of hope
Surge in your cheeks, and saw the old light leap
In your dimmed eyes, till, by the warm peat-glow,
You sank in slumber, breathing calm and slow ;
And still I watch you, dreaming, as you sleep.

The wasting years, the barren days are past ;
No longer memory lets his arrows fly,
To stab and stab the heart that would not die
Because it knew that you would come at last.
Your eyelids flicker, and more fitfully
You slumber as the peat-ash crumbles white :
Yet, though you waken in the heart of night,
Within your eyes will dawn love's victory.

The Lough

BESIDE my ever-grazing sheep,
I watched the white cloud-shadows race
Across the blue lough's ruffled deep;
When, leaning o'er the pillared steep,
Beneath whose shade dark waters sleep,
I saw her white face by my face.

Where, mirrored in the shadow clear,
My own strange eyes looked up at me,
Her brown eyes glistened bright with fear
As those of some young fallow-deer
That, startled by a glancing spear,
Stays, cowering, ere it turn to flee.

THE LOUGH

Then foam-white face and wavering hair
Within the water shuddered dark ;
And, thinking some hill-maiden fair
Had leant o'er me, I turned, but there
No maid I found ; though from the air,
Hawk-shadowed, dropped a silent lark,

As, under sudden-swooping dread,
From my so long unclouded life
Joy fluttered, falling still and dead ;
And sheltering peace on light wings fled ;
And rent with pain, my torn heart bled,
Caught in the clutch of taloned strife.

And I—who thought to see love's light
Well in the clear, untroubled blue
Of maiden-eyes with morning bright,

THE LOUGH

And watch with love the calm years' flight—
Must seek in everlasting night
Those eyes that pierced me through and through.

Beyond the fells' far edge, the day
Fades slowly from my eager eyes;
And in the lough's cold waters grey
With rustling stir the dark reeds sway,
As up the ancient, star-strewn way
I watch the last moon slowly rise.

I wait until the cold moon-beam
Shall pierce with light the darkling lake—
That I may plunge within the gleam,
And follow through the deeps of dream
Her glancing eyes and hair astream
Through night no dawn shall ever break.

The Fire

BRUSHWOOD and broom I bring to feed my fire :
Brief-flaming bracken ; brittle-flaring ling ;
Quick-crackling gorse ; and cones that smoulder-
ing sing

With sappy hiss as blue flames jet and spire ;

Beech-mast and leaves, through long years
bedded deep ;

Pine-needles stacked about rock-rooted firs
In woodland hollows where no echo stirs —
I bring to feed the blaze that shall not sleep.

And fierce it leaps, exultant, through the night,
In fresh-fed fury roaring to the stars ;

THE FIRE

While gaunt, black shadows move among the
scars,

Whose craggy spurs are tipped with golden light.

By night and day, the perishing, bright flame,
Wind-flourished, flares and fails, yet never dies ;
But lives that I therein may watch your eyes—
Those fire-bright eyes my love could never tame,

Which, from the white heat of the burning core,
Look out upon me, as I gaze and gaze.

I bring fresh boughs to feed the hungry blaze,
That fire may burn your heart for evermore,

Wherever in far southern lands you roam,
By what marshlight of wandering passion led ;
For cold and white and empty lies my bed ;
Deserted, bare, and windswept is my home.

THE FIRE

Without foreboding, from the fold I turned
To come to you, but o'er the heather-thatch
No smoke of welcome curled ; I raised the latch ;
No fire of welcome on the hearth-stone burned.

I called your name ; I climbed the ladder-stair
Unto the roof-tree-chamber, raftered low ;
The sunset filled it with a golden glow
Of mocking light, but you I found not there.

Long, long I called your name in bield and byre,
And fold and shieling, over hill and dale ;
Your heart heard not. With hands that never
fail,

I feed and feed the ever-failing fire.

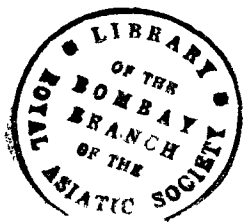
Wide-eyed, nor ever slumbering, night or day,
I watch the flame that lives upon my life,

THE FIRE

That trampling shower or thunder's crashing
strife

Shall never quench till all be burned away;

Till, when, at last, consumed and spent, I fall
In cold, grey ash of passion's fiery gold,
Where'er you be, your heart will shudder cold,
Your feet will turn to answer to my call.



The Haymakers

LAST night, as in my bed, awake,
I fretted for the day,
I heard the landrail's ceaseless crake
Among the unmown hay ;

And in my head the thought that burned,
And parched my lips and throat,
Was like a wheel of fire that turned
Upon that aching note.

From time's unceasing loom outdrawn
On webs of glimmering light
The slow hours trailed, as though no dawn
Would end the breathless night.

But with the crowing of the cock,
The hours of waiting passed ;

THE HAYMAKERS

And slowly a shrill-chiming clock
Struck out the night at last.

I rose; and soon my hot eyes roved
O'er meadows dewy-deep
That 'neath the wind of morning moved
As if they turned from sleep;

And where the crimson-rambler wreathed
The casement of my room,
Upon my brow the cool air breathed
As on each fading bloom.

I watched the martin wheel and poise
Above his nested mate,
When, clear through morning's murmurous noise
I heard a clicking gate,

THE HAYMAKERS

As, down the dipping meadow-road,
He bore, with easy pace,
His shouldered scythe; and brightly glowed
The dawnlight on his face.

All morn, with swinging chorus blithe,
Unwearied, through cool hours,
Was heard the swishing of the scythe
Among the grass and flowers.

All morn, behind the swaying row
Of shoulders brown and bare,
I followed, glad at heart to know
He moved before me there.

And, as I laboured with the rake
Among the stricken grass,

THE HAYMAKERS

Light-footed in the mowers' wake,
The happy hours did pass.

Too swift they fled; and all too soon
The hour of resting came,
When o'er the withering field the noon
Hung like an azure flame;

For, as he sank, in shadow cool,
From out the sun that burned,
Beside an alder-shaded pool,
Not unto me he turned,

But looked upon the quivering blaze
With blue eyes cold and clear,
That never thrilled with love's amaze
Of joy and hope and fear.

THE HAYMAKERS

And though, afar, beneath the briar,
I watched him where he lay,
He knew not that my eyes afire
Burned brighter than the day.

With easy glance of careless life
Upon the untroubled blue
He looked, undreaming of the strife
That shook me through and through.

And yet so loudly in my breast
Beat my tormented heart—
As if to rouse him from his rest—
I thought to see him start,

Like one awaked from midnight sleep
By knocking in the dark ;

THE HAYMAKERS

But in his eyes, unclouded deep
There gleamed no kindling spark.

To-night, no rails, unresting, crake
'Mid fallen grass and flowers;
Naught stirs, and yet I lie awake
And count the crawling hours;

And, as I watch the glimmering light,
I wait dawn tremblingly,
Lest in the silence of the night,
His heart has turned to me;

Lest I shall find the day has come—
As yet the day shall rise—
When he will stand before me dumb,
The fire within his eyes.

The Arrow

By peat-black waters flecked with foam,
She lay beneath the flaming west ;
I plucked the arrow from her breast,
And staunched the wound, and bore her home.

Before the hearth's warm-glowing peat,
I laid her on my bracken-bed,
And loosed the dank hair round her head,
And chafed her snow-cold hands and feet,

Until the living colour crept
Through her sweet body ; and her eyes
Looked into mine with still surprise,
Once only, ere she softly slept.

THE ARROW

Yet, though she wakened not nor stirred,
I looked in those dark eyes all night
Within the peat-glow, till the light
Of morning roused some restless bird ;

When, in the dawning's drowsy grey,
With watching spent, I fell asleep,
And slumbered till the bleat of sheep
Awakened me ; and it was day.

Cold on my brow I felt the wind
That gently flapped the unlatched door,
And stirred the bracken on the floor ;
Whereon I looked, and thought to find

Beauty yet slumbering in the gold
Of withered fern ; but no dark head

THE ARROW

Now nestled in the bracken-bed
That rustled in the dawnwind cold.

And she was gone, I knew not where;
I only knew that I must go
To seek her ever, high and low,
O'er hills and valleys of despair.

So, flinging wide the flapping door,
I turned my back upon my home.
By peat-black waters flecked with foam,
From dawn till dark, for evermore,

O'er moss and fell, I keep my quest,
Grown old and frail, with failing breath;
Though now I know that only death
May pluck the arrow from my breast.

Roman's Leap

THEY found you nigh the foot of Roman's Leap,
Deep-buried in the bracken's rustling gold,
Your arm beneath you bent, your brown face
cold ;

Yet, all-unheeding, round you grazed your sheep.

They found you nigh the foot of Roman's Leap :
They laid you on a hurdle, bracken-strewn ;
They bore you home beneath the waning moon,
With laboured breathing up the craggy steep.

They found you nigh the foot of Roman's Leap :
Their whispering shadows darkened in the door ;

ROMAN'S LEAP

With clacking clogs they crossed the sanded
floor ;
And in with them the whole night seemed to
sweep.

They found you nigh the foot of Roman's Leap :
They laid you out upon the four-post bed,
With candles at your feet and at your head—
Salt on your breast, your soul from harm to keep.

They found you nigh the foot of Roman's Leap :
I watch alone beside you in the night ;
So calm your face seems in the candle-light,
I watch and wonder if you only sleep.

They found you nigh the foot of Roman's Leap :
Day glimmers wanly at the blinded pane ;

ROMAN'S LEAP

Yet never will you wake at dawn again,
And from my side in tender silence creep.

They found you nigh the foot of Roman's Leap;
Deep-buried in the bracken's rustling gold.
Dumb grief within my heart is pent and cold;
Unloose thy clutch, O death, that I may weep!

In the Night

I NEVER thought to see the light
Of day, or watch the pale sun rise,
Who, in the wondering heart of night,
With fearful, living eyes
Have looked upon a soul new-come from paradise.

I roamed through glimmering syke and slack,
Grief-ridden, o'er the fells afar—
Above me looming, gaunt and black,
Sheer crag and soaring scar
That pillared low-hung night unlit of moon or
star.

IN THE NIGHT

No bark of foxes rent the air,
Nor any moor-owl's hunting-cry ;
Mist-laden silence everywhere
Drooped from the windless sky
On shadowy plumes that low upon the bent did
lie.

Unrippling, 'neath the mist, the lake
Like some wan, ghostly water gleamed ;
Yet slumbered not, but awed, awake,
Beneath the dark crag seemed
To wait some vision dread whereof by day it
dreamed.

Yea, hushed the whole earth listening lay
When loud I called upon the name
That burdens my dumb heart by day ;

IN THE NIGHT

And wonder overcame

My sorrow as the mist was cleft by sudden
flame ;

And in the tranced heart of night,
She stood before my living eyes,
Her body glistening and white,
As though she fresh did rise
From crystal, dreaming deeps of pools of paradise.

Upon a little hill apart—
The eternal radiance round her shed—
Her beauty burned so on my heart
That, filled with happy dread,
I sank as one whom God with joy hath stricken
dead.

IN THE NIGHT

Yet, ere the darkness closed, I felt
The breath of heaven upon my cheek,
And knew that in the grass she knelt
Over my body weak,
Then stood with parted lips as if she fain would
speak ;

Though no words came ; and, silently,
The swathing mist about her swept ;
And on me from the midnight sky
A blinding darkness leapt,
And long, as one new-dead, within its clutch I
slept ;

Until the curlew's calling shrill
Sang rippling through that slumber deep ;
And, waking, down a far-off hill,

IN THE NIGHT

I watched the shadows creep
Before the light of dawn that crested every steep.

Wan, wan doth gleam the dawning light,
And wanly doth the pale sun rise;
My soul is weary for the night
When I, with deathless eyes,
From earth's last ridge shall look on her in
paradise.

The Harp

I HEARD a murmurous sound of throbbing strings
That quivered in the sunlight by the stream—
Sad notes that fluttered like a young heart breaking
The dim, blue hollows of the woodland waking
With sorrows from the shadow-world of dream,
And tales of shadow-haunted queens and kings.

Over your harp you bent ; but when I came
Your eyes met mine, and your sad singing died—
Though yet among the strings your fingers
 straying
Thrilled the hushed woodlands with enchanted
 playing—

THE HARP

As you arose to wander by my side,
Breathing sweet words that set my heart aflame.

From cups of crystal and of amethyst
And golden bowls of summer, sapphire-lipped,
—We drank deep draughts of life, O love, together;
We wandered through dim nights among the
heather

In late September when the young moon dipped
Her amber horn in dewy, silver mist.

And now that winter comes, and wood and
fell

In one white whirl are hidden from our eyes,
Dreaming together by the sparkling embers,
You touch, once more, the harp that still re-
members—

THE HARP

Though in our hearts no shade of sorrow lies—
The dark-eyed sorrows that in dreamland dwell.

I hear once more the tale of queens and kings
Caught in the nets of love, and how they died ;
Yet—though for all the sorrow of the telling
Tears of compassion in my eyes are welling—
Because we two have wandered side by side,
My heart may grieve not with the grieving strings.

A Selection from Elkin Mathews' List of New Books.

WORKS BY WILFRID AND ELIZABETH GIBSON.

THE GOLDEN HELM, and other Verse. By
WILFRID WILSON GIBSON. Fcap. 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

"Words and thought move together in noble harmony, and the work is the outcome of passion and imagination, controlled by a wise artistic restraint."—*Glasgow Herald*.

The following, Royal 16mo., 1s. net each.

URLYN THE HARPER, and other Song. By
WILFRID WILSON GIBSON. [Second Edition.

"Here, at last, is something with the ring of true poetry, something that pleases the ear and awakens a responsive echo in the soul :

[Three stanzas quoted.]

Here diction and style are simple, clear, and unaffected, while every line is instinct with the breath of life. In 'Urlyn the Harper' the romance of beauty and passion is told in lines that burn. There is as much natural imagery inwoven into the sentiment as suffices to adorn the tale without cloying our senses. And while the theme is not too remote from actual experience, the poem is invested with an atmosphere of enchantment. The magician's hand has touched the harp of life."—*Daily News*.

THE QUEEN'S VIGIL, and other Song. By
WILFRID WILSON GIBSON. [Second Edition.

"'The Queen's Vigil' more than fulfils the promise of the Author's earlier volume, 'Urlyn the Harper.' It is not easy to analyse Mr. Gibson's art. While his verse is both spontaneous and artistic, there is nothing artificial about it. It has distinction without eccentricity."—*Daily News*.

* * *URLYN THE HARPER, THE QUEEN'S VIGIL*, and other
Song, bound together in Cloth, 2s. 6d. net.

THE BURDEN OF LOVE. By ELIZABETH GIBSON.

"Miss Gibson is plainly in possession of the root of the matter; she is swayed by a music that is a heritage, not a result of teaching or experiment, and she chooses her themes in a skilful manner."—*Literary World*.

FROM A CLOISTER. By ELIZABETH GIBSON.

"These poems contain some fine lines."—*Morning Post*.

"Miss Gibson improves at such a rapid rate, so rapidly indeed, that we are as surprised as we are delighted."—*Literary World*.

A FLOCK OF DREAMS. By ELIZABETH GIBSON.

"Poems of a reflective cast, showing taste and fancy."—*Times*.

LOVE'S FUGITIVES. By ELIZABETH GIBSON.

"In this new volume of the notable little 'Vigo Cabinet' series there are some gems of simple song which stand out polished and complete."—*Bookman*.

"The fourth volume of gentle, polished verse which Miss Gibson has contributed to this series."—*Times*.

A CHRISTMAS GARLAND: Carols. By ELIZABETH GIBSON. With Drawings by EDITH CALVERT. 16mo. 6d. net.

"... Too slight for any lengthy criticism, but its author sounds the finest rarest note. ... Worth its price for the sake of one little gem."—*Week's Survey*.

A HYMN TO DIONYSUS, and other Poems. By MARGARET SACKVILLE. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

"Lady Margaret Sackville, in her first book of 'Poems,' furnished ample proof that she was no unworthy descendant of Thomas Sackville, the first Earl of Dorset, joint author of the first English tragedy in blank verse—acted in 1562 before Queen Elizabeth—and of Charles Sackville, who deserves to be remembered, if only for his delightful song, 'To all you ladies now on land.' That she possesses the true spirit of poetry will be seen."—*Daily Graphic*.

"Will be read with much interest by her many admirers."—*Daily Mail*.

"A delightful volume of varied and felicitous verse."—*Observer*.

"She is tasteful, vague, always on a high level of emotion. What more can we want to-day?"—*Daily Chronicle*.

ODETTE D'ANTREVERNES: A Fairy Tale for Weary People. By ARTHUR ANNESLEY RONALD FIRBANK. Pott 4to. 2s. net.

THE GREEK KALENDS: A Comedy mainly in Verse. By ARTHUR DILLON. Royal 16mo. 3s. 6d. net.

"Cleverly written, both the prose and the poetry being of good quality."—*Times*.

DE FLAGELLO MYRTEO: Thoughts on Love. Royal 16mo. Cloth gilt, 2s. 6d. net.

DAYS OF OLD ROME. By ARTHUR LEWIS. With Illustrations by EDITH CALVERT. Pott 4to. 3s. 6d. net.

"Contains scholarly and carefully-wrought work."—*Daily Chronicle*.

"Poems which mirror in excellently chosen words and phrase typical phases of the life of old Rome."—*Glasgow Herald*.

THE HERBS OF MEDEA: A Five-pointed Leaf from the Tree Ygdrasil. By DOROTHEA HOLLINS ("THEOPHILA NORTH.") With Coloured Frontispiece. Fcap. 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

"The world of visions and dreams, the symbolism of the Dominican painter, and the contemplation of the East woven into the picture of the Garden of Meoea and her seven herbs, and the deepest faith 'in the power of life to triumph over death.'"—*Daily News*.

SWEETBRIAR: A Pastoral with Songs. By DOROTHEA GORE BROWNE. Illustrated by EDITH CALVERT. Imp. 16mo. 2s. 6d. net.

"Will attract those who know real poetry when they read it . . . But charming as are Miss Gore Browne's verses, it is no dispraise to say that the delightful drawings which Miss Calvert has contributed give the volume an additional charm. For they afford that unique combination of the simple and the picturesque which is the highest perfection of artistic illustration."—*Bookseller*.

"This pretty and ear-haunting pastoral—one which reproduces the thirteenth century spirit very naturally, and should provide many an attractive entertainment for May-days to come."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"The spirit of the spring is in her lines, and the freedom of the forest in her songs."—*Bookman*.

A CHAPLET OF VERSE FOR CHILDREN.

By Mrs. ALFRED BALDWIN. With 21 Illustrations by JOHN D. BATTEN. Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

"A book that takes a place by itself is Mrs. Baldwin's dainty volume. Mrs. Baldwin is the wife of a well-known Midland M.P., and an aunt of Mr. Kipling as well. What is more to the purpose, she has a genuine affection for all that relates to child-life, and this book of verses on every aspect of playtime and day-dreams should take a wider hold than any of her previous books."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"Mrs. Baldwin possesses the rare gift of writing verses for the young folks which they will care to read, and which they will understand and enjoy."—*Academy*.

"Mrs. Baldwin's lines are charming in their simplicity."—*World*.

"The get-up of the book is excellent, and Mr. Batten's illustrations are charming."—*Week's Survey*.

HAND IN HAND. Verses by a Mother and Daughter. With a Frontispiece in Photogravure by J. LOCKWOOD KIPLING. Pott 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

[*Second Edition*.]

"It does not want the criticism of genius to detect the family from which these verses sprang. . . . And quite apart from relationship, the verses themselves are of very unusual value. . . . This little book, we think, will come to be known as the work of a mother and a sister rather than by its present title."—*Daily Chronicle*.

"This little book of verse is commended to notice alike by its intrinsic merit and a more adventitious claim. . . . The poems thus powerfully presented to attention have met with high praise, and that deservedly. . . . We take leave of a book which makes a decided mark and leaves one very clear as to the origins of MR. KIPLING'S own genius."—*Academy*.

THE VIEWS OF CHRISTOPHER. With a Preface by COULSON KERNAHAN. Fcap. 8vo. Wrapper, 1s. net; Cloth, 1s. 6d. net.

[*Second Edition*.]

"It is quite worth while to inspire our youth with longings after noble ideals, even if they cannot realise them wholly. 'Show Thy servants Thy Work' 'Christopher's' views are well worth reading, and so long as England produces Christophers, she will not be absolutely lost."—*Guardian*.

"A book to be read and re-read. . . . its charm lies not only in its thought, but in its style. . . . It sparkles with gems, and there is not one dull line in it. This most original and daring book."—*Great Thoughts*.

THE VINTAGE OF DREAMS: Six Short Stories.

By ST. JOHN LUCAS, author of "The Absurd Repentance." Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

"A series of pleasing idylls, very simple in style and motive, and couched in a sincere, sympathetic, and contagious strain of feeling. They present humour as well as fantasy, and show a decided artistic completeness suggestive of literary range."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

BROADLAND, and other Poems. By G. F. BRADBY. Crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net.

"The last poem, 'Rugby Close,' may stand for as touching a recollection of the old school as has been written since Arnold's day."—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

"One poem ['Versailles'] stands quite apart, and we are tempted to say that, but for a last not quite effective change, it would be that rare thing—a perfect poem."—*Glasgow Herald*.

LONDON ETCHINGS. By A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK.

Fcap 8vo. Wrapper, 1s. net; Cloth, 1s. 6d. net.

"It should command a large sale among all who love what is beautiful and earnest and delicate in literature. And the humour of the book is quiet, restrained, and sure."—*To-day*.

"The most delicate and finished prose work that has so far come from this popular author's pen."—*Sunday Times*.

"We welcome the frank slightness of these sketches. It is part of a recognition that the *how* is more than the *how much*, which is new in English literary art. . . . As slight and clever fragments of observation, 'London Etchings' are well done."—*Athenæum*.

A GUIDE TO THE BEST HISTORICAL NOVELS AND TALES. By JONATHAN NIELD.

Third and Cheaper Edition (4th Thousand). Revised throughout and much enlarged. Pott 4to. 4s. net.

"Shows continuous improvements in its new editions. . . . The clearness and conciseness of the book add immensely to its value."—*The Times*.

"We are glad to see a third edition, enlarged to 235 pages, of Mr. Nield's most capable *Guide*."—*Athenæum*.

"This admirable guide. . . . Altogether, a compact, accurate, and valuable companion to the novel reader . . . and an exceedingly valuable aid for the librarians of both adult and juvenile libraries."—*Literary World*.

A MAINSAIL HAUL (NAUTICAL YARNS).

By JOHN MASEFIELD. With Frontispiece by JACK B. YEATS. Fcap. 8vo. Wrapper, 1s. net; Cloth, 1s. 6d. net.

BALLADS. By J. MASEFIELD. Royal 16mo. 1s. net.

"Full of vigour and promise, delicacy and beauty."—*Daily News*.

"Deserves a place on your shelf not far from Mr. Newbolt and Mr. Kipling."—*Star*.

"Brave ballads with a fine swing."—*Academy*.

"Good verse instinct with dramatic feeling."—*Vanity Fair*.

THE GARDEN OF FRANCESCA, and other

Poems. By HENRY CULLIMORE, M.A. Pott 4to. 3s. 6d. net.

"The poem has many admirable qualities to commend it, and in its versification and treatment of passion represents the author's highest attainment. The final scene is excellent drama and excellent poetry."—*Glasgow Herald*.

"The little drama has absorbed the wonderful sentiment of the tale, and the language is lissome and passionate and fresh."—*Saturday Review*.

"A volume remarkable for its proficiency in balance and mastery of varied form . . . these verses reveal a scholar of refined and intimate expression."—*Manchester Guardian*.

THE HUNDRED WINDOWS. By H. D. LOWRY, Crown 8vo. 3s. 6d. net.

"Simplicity and melody are rare gifts, and the double endowment lends real charm to these excursions down the 'starlit street of Memories'."—*Spectator*.

"A pellucid rill of meaning music—of the authentic music."—*Morning Post*.

"This exquisite collection of lyrics."—*Ladies' Field*.

THE BOSUN AND THE BOB-TAILED

COMET. (One of JACK B. YEATS's Books for Children.) With 20 Illustrations by the Author. Fcap. 8vo. 1s. net.

THE GATE OF SMARAGDUS. By GORDON

BOTTOMLEY, author of "The Crier by Night." Decorated by CLINTON BALMER. Demy 4to. 10s.

LONDON: ELKIN MATHEWS, VIGO STREET, W.

vi.



00046170

V 821.8
Gib/94e

46170

Gibson, Wilfrid Wilson
Queen's vigil and
other song 1902

DIGITIZED

02 MAY 2017

V
(SRB)

